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POLAND AS A SOVIET SUPPLY BASE

T. Norwid

Through cracks in the Iron Curtain and from different sources there comes news from time to time which enables one to form a relatively accurate picture of the development of war industry in Poland. Despite the fact that Moscow concentrates its attention mostly on the Near and Far East, it does not underestimate in any way the strategic importance of Poland. There is much which indicates Soviet regard for Poland as an invaluable supply base in the possible Soviet war with the Western Powers.

In Lublin, under the direction of Soviet engineers, construction has recently been begun on gigantic machine shops for the repair and assembly of all types of motor vehicles, including tanks. These machine shops are to comprise the largest Soviet technical base in Poland. For 2 years, the Soviets and Poles have been building machine shops for repair of submarines and a large supply base for them in Swinoujscie. Soviet electrical engineers are building a large electrical power center in Dychow, Poland, from plans prepared by the Leningrad branch of the Gidroenergoprojekt (All Union Institute for Hydroelectric Power Planning and Research). A similar station is being built at Jaworzno, based on a plan prepared by the Leningrad Branch of the Teploenergoprojekt (All-Union Trust for Surveying and Planning Heat and Power Networks and Substations).

The enormous increase of cement production should arouse special attention. This is not, by any means, being used for peaceful construction. The construction of another giant cement factory in Wierzbica, near Radom, was recently finished under the supervision of Soviet engineers.

An automobile factory in Zeran, near Warsaw, was originally intended to produce cars bearing the Fiat trademark, but the plan was changed in 1951. A large number of Soviet machine tools were imported to begin serial production and assembly of Soviet trucks and passenger cars of the Moskvich brand. Ten Soviet specialists supervise the production.

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More than 100 such specialists are now working in Stalowa Wola, where they are feverishly producing 150 millimeter antiaircraft cannon with radar-controlled sighting instruments. The guns are an improved version of the German flak guns of the last phase of World War II. They are motor-driven and even mechanically loaded.

Ferrum, the world-famed pipe factory, located near Krakow, at present is manufacturing armor plate for tanks and naval vessels. The Zygmunt steel plant is manufacturing heavier armor plate. The Pokoj and Karol steel plants in Gorny Slask produce armor plate for tank turrets.

The Stalin (previously Cegielski and Company), Pawagag (in Wroclaw), and Wagmo Gora railroad-car factories for the present produce exclusively freight cars with Soviet inscriptions and painted with colors customary in the USSR. The trucks are adapted for change from European standard gauge to the Soviet wide gauge. This change is quickly carried out at border stations of the USSR.

Most of the Polish metal factories produce enormous quantities of ammunition, but they clearly could not meet the plans; therefore, the old German ammunition factories in Kolobrzeg and Legnica were expanded considerably. That does not alter the fact that the production of ammunition is mainly concentrated in central and eastern Poland.

At the same time, the government is concentrating on the food produced in Poland, and production of canned goods rises daily. Alongside all slaughterhouses, meat-canning plants and cold-storage plants have sprung up, the latter often underground. The canned goods are shipped in part to the USSR, but considerable quantities are stored in Poland. None of this is sold to the population. The largest cold-storage plant is located 12 meters underground at Swinioujscie. Besides canned goods, bread grain is stored in different places in Poland. An appreciable portion of this supply is found in giant elevators and silos in Lublin Wojewodztwo.

Thousands of Soviet engineers, specialists in war industries, and military personnel travel throughout Poland and confer with Polish industrial directors and authorities on new war industries and military supply plants. Especially striking is the rush with which all these plans are being accomplished, without the least regard to the interests of the populace. Ammunition and aircraft factories work in three shifts.

All war industries are well guarded under the direction of Soviet MVD personnel. The workers live under rigid control. In practice, they may not change jobs, and their freedom of movement is totally restricted. They live in an atmosphere of general suspicion, and hysterical spy mania is prevalent everywhere, often causing arrests, police interrogation, etc.

The development of war industry has not helped the living standard of the population but makes an unendurable burden for the people. Since 1 April, meat and fat rationing has been introduced, and all provisions not rationed have become twice as expensive.

In restaurants and cafes, one can get meat dishes only at extremely high so-called commercial prices. Veal may be purchased only on a doctor's prescription.

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